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**AFGHANISTAN:
ARE WE DOING WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO WIN?**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

Afghanistan: Are We Doing What We Need To Do To Win?

The international community, as a whole, works to ensure that Afghanistan is no longer a safe haven for extremists and terrorist organizations. Capable and sustainable governance of Afghanistan by Afghans is the common agreed upon end state, but also serves as the last common benchmark guiding efforts for U.S. and NATO forces. This paper will analyze the approach to reconstruction and development (R&D) in Afghanistan from an operational perspective. R&D, as opposed to the U.S. term Stability and Reconstruction (S&R), will be used in this analysis as it may be more appropriate considering NATO's stated objective of "helping the government of Afghanistan extend its authority," rather than simply secure and rebuild. The thesis is that NATO is currently not acting in an effective manner from a theater strategic and operational perspective to meet theater strategic and operational objectives. This paper will address the operational environment, the plan guiding R&D, U.S. and ISAF operations, then discuss an alternative perspective on what needs to happen in Afghanistan to achieve unity of effort in reconstruction and development operations and close with some recommendations on practical application of changes.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
The Operational Environment in Afghanistan	3
The Reconstruction and Development Plan	6
U.S. and ISAF Operations	10
Conclusion	17
Recommendations	18
Select Bibliography	19

List of Illustrations

Figure	Title	Page
1.	Afghanistan ISAF RC and PRT Locations	12
2.	The Central Idea for Conducting SSTR Operations	15

INTRODUCTION

The age old question of “Why are we here?” presents itself to both NATO and the U.S. operational commands in Afghanistan. While the answers for each organization are related, there are some fundamental differences. The international community, as a whole, works to ensure that Afghanistan is no longer a safe haven for extremists and terrorist organizations. Capable and sustainable governance of Afghanistan by Afghans is the common agreed upon end state based on the stated objectives and serves as the common benchmark guiding efforts for U.S. and NATO forces.

The U.S. Department of Defense and the Bush administration did a phenomenal job during the fall of 2001 in the immediate wake of 9/11 to identify the perpetrators and determine that there was a distinct threat to national security posed by the lack of governance and the associated terrorist haven in Afghanistan. The Taliban regime was swiftly ousted in the initial stages of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and the international community was invited to be part of the Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) operations that followed. The stated U.S. objectives “were both broad and clear: root out al Qaeda and the Taliban forces, prevent their return, support self-governance, and ensure security, stability and reconstruction.”¹ The effectiveness of NATO’s establishment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul with regards to reconstruction will be discussed later. Over time, as the nature of the conflict changed in Afghanistan and the additional demands were placed on the U.S. armed forces posed by OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), the approach to operations changed and is still evolving today. The two “campaigns” that the U.S. and international community are, first, removing terrorist forces

¹ Victoria Holt, “Peace and Stability in Afghanistan: U.S. Goals, Challenged by Security Gap,” *The Henry L. Stimson Center*, June 2002, pp. 1.

from Afghanistan and secondly, building a viable and secure state from the political perspective.²

ISAF, serving as NATO's operational command in Afghanistan has stated that the mission is "to help the government of President Hamid Karzai extend its authority."³ This is a very clear statement but is perhaps too broad to present any real meaning to an operational headquarters that has grown from a constabulary force in Kabul in 2002 to a theater operational command encompassing the entire country and sub-divided into five regional commands each sponsored by different NATO countries. An alliance such as NATO brings some inherent advantages to the operational environment, not the least of which is the additional capacity brought with additional troops. These advantages are in many cases countered by the disadvantages presented by working within the constructs of the international community.

This paper will analyze the approach to reconstruction and development (R&D) in Afghanistan from an operational perspective. R&D, as opposed to the U.S. term Stability and Reconstruction (S&R), will be used in this analysis as it may be more appropriate considering NATO's stated objective of "helping the government of Afghanistan extend its authority," rather than simply secure and rebuild. The thesis is that NATO is currently not acting in an effective manner from a theater strategic and operational perspective to meet theater strategic and operational objectives. This paper will address the operational environment, the plan guiding R&D, U.S. and ISAF operations, then discuss an alternative perspective on what needs to happen in Afghanistan to achieve unity of effort in reconstruction and development operations and close with some recommendations on

² Ibid, pp.1.

³ Carl Robichaud, *Afghanistan Watch*, 28 Nov 06.

http://www.afghanistanwatch.org/2006/11/what_are_natos_.html (accessed 19 March 2008).

practical application of changes. My own personal experience on the ISAF staff and operational theory will serve as the background on which analysis is conducted.

THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

Often, the mention of the term “operational environment” leads a discussion in effects based operations. While I am not personally a proponent of an effects based approach to operations (EBAO), describing the situation in Afghanistan in EBAO terms highlights a fundamental disconnect in the way both the U.S. and ISAF have addressed operations with respect to stated objectives. “For example, a “system of systems” could include the economic entities in a nation, such as the banking system, the production system, etc. EBAO advocates do not make clear distinctions among situations based on the objective to be accomplished.”⁴ For the sake of this analysis, the description of the operational environment is simply intended to provide some situational awareness of the operating environment and highlight some critical links to the stated objectives of the U.S. and ISAF.

First and foremost, an understanding of the people of Afghanistan is in order. There are several ethnic groups, but the majority of the population is Pashtu (40 %), then Tajik (25%), Hazara (18%), Uzbek (6%), and other (11%).⁵ These groups, for the most part, share a common language within their ethnic group, but are further divided into tribal affiliations and are not necessarily constrained by recognized borders, most notably in the eastern region that borders Pakistan. Some of these groups have an association with a particular trade or specialized occupation. For instance, while the Pashtuns are generally thought of as agrarian, some tribes are associated specifically with being government bureaucrats, some having legal skills, and others as construction experts. While this type of information is somewhat

⁴ Milan N. Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Naval War College, September 2007, pp. XIII-78.

⁵ <http://countrystudies.us/afghanistan/38.htm> (accessed 27 march 2008).

important when it comes to kinetic operations, it is vitally important in relation to capacity building as a part of reconstruction and development efforts.

Overlaying these groupings are religious affiliations. “Approximately 99 percent of Afghans are Muslims, and out of them, eighty percent are Sunni of the Hanafi School; the rest are Shi'a, the majority of whom are Twelver along with smaller numbers of Ismailis. There is also a strong influence of Sufism among both Sunni and Shi'a communities.”⁶ In a country that has recently been ruled by an extremist government founded on religious law, this aspect of the Afghan people adds a considerable challenge to any attempt at determining what may be contributing to violence. History has seen both brutal fighting and alliances of convenience between ethnic groups and tribes as well as different religious affiliations and must be taken into account during operational planning if there is to be any hope of meeting strategic objectives.

Secondly, an understanding of the government is imperative. Afghanistan has a sordid history of rule and governments. The landlocked country is more or less the cross-roads of eastern and western Asia. Governance has varied depending on who the most recent conqueror was. Afghanistan has been ruled by the Persians, the Greeks, the Mongols, unified Afghan tribes, Imperial Great Britain, an Afghan monarchy, the Soviets, and Islamic fundamentalists.⁷ No single government in this list could be considered anything remotely democratic. The current government, while democratic, has many aspects represented in religious rule and communism. There are many ministries that duplicate efforts of others and because ministers are appointed by law according to ethnicity, there is often not just a lack of coordination between ministries, but an outright confrontational environment.

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Afghanistan (accessed 26 March 2008).

⁷ <http://www.afghangovernment.com/briefhistory.htm> (accessed 27 March 2008).

From a capacity perspective, because of the fighting and violence associated with regime change and occupation over the past 30 years, there is a distinct lack of middle aged professionals available to assume government occupations and perform in a responsible fashion. Additionally, the conscious lack of education of the population attributable to poor governance, a lack of financial resources and any associated educational system within the country has exacerbated the problem of a lack of educated professionals.

Finally, the military of Afghanistan except for a brief period in the 1960s and 1970s could not be considered a professional military capable of providing security for the country. Armed security forces have been primarily associated with tribal needs. While alliances did occur, they were born out of necessity and quickly dissolved when the common threat passed. The British and Soviet occupations serve as prime examples. Most recently, warlords have been the figures associated with power and security. “Ordinary Afghans are increasingly terrorized by the rule of local and regional military commanders – warlords.”⁸ The challenge is not only to build security forces that include the Afghan National Army (ANA), the Afghan National Police (ANP), and Afghan Border Police (ABP) under the authority of the central government, but to change the perception of the population in regards to who provides for their security.

In a country that is roughly the size of Texas, with a population of approximately 31 million people at the median age of 17 years,⁹ it goes without saying there is a considerable challenge with respect to capacity. Growth in an economy where the GDP was about \$35 billion in 2007 will be slow. Transportation and trade are a challenge with only 5,100 miles

⁸ <http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/afghanistan/warlords.htm> (accessed 27 March 2008).

⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (accessed 27 march 2008).

of paved roads.¹⁰ It is worth noting that the scale on which the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) operates is 5% of the U.S. Department of Defense budget.

With the basic understanding of the people, the government, and the security forces of Afghanistan, analysis of the operational decisions of both the U.S. and ISAF is much more coherent. At first glance, the military approach by both the U.S. and ISAF focused primarily on the security may seem reasonable if the argument is that the competencies of the military or NATO involve only security. When reviewing the environment objectively, it seems that in a society that has been exposed to nothing except fighting for the last 40 years, the direct brute-force approach to counter-insurgency (COIN) operations may not be the most effective, especially in light of the fact that the government itself lacks capacity to plan and organize a viable reconstruction and development program focused on Afghanistan. Rather than simply providing security for the 8th worst failing state on the globe¹¹, effort may be better spent on the application of non-kinetic capabilities focused on coordinating R&D activities at the national level addressing all the elements essential to rebuilding the country. In the end, the real definition of a “win” in Afghanistan, as both the NATO and U.S. stated objectives imply, is leaving the country with a stable self-sustaining government capable of functioning in the globalized 21st century world we live in.

THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Despite the nearly complete lack of media coverage of the plan guiding the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, one does exist. The Afghan National

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *The Failed States Index*, www.foreignpolicy.com, July/August 2007, pp. 57.

Development Strategy (ANDS) is expected to be finalized in mid 2008.¹² The international community in concert with the Government of Afghanistan (GOA) has developed a three pillared plan to chart the reconstruction and development of the country. The Afghan Compact is the associated agreement of support that outlines specific support by individual nations and agencies that are to assist in different areas of reform and development.

The ANDS is specifically stated to be the plan of the Afghan government. As mentioned, it focuses on three main areas. The first pillar of “Security” is the main focus of both the U.S. and NATO. Currently, together they present a security force of approximately 43,000 (35,000 NATO and 8,000 U.S.).¹³ The U.S. has put forth considerable effort in building the Afghan capability through the training and equipping of the ANA and ANP. After ISAF assumed operational control of all of Afghanistan in the fall of 2006, Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan reorganized as the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan, focusing on the rebuilding of Afghan security forces.¹⁴ “The Afghanistan National Army (ANA) achieved strength of 42,200 and successfully executed both independent and complex joint operations with ISAF on a daily basis.”¹⁵ Additionally, the security sector includes counter-drug and mine awareness operations that are supported by the international community.

The second pillar is “Governance, Rule of Law and Humanitarian Rights.” Although second, this is the most important pillar with respect seeding the population with the ideas of a democratic society bound by laws that are enforceable by a central government as opposed

¹² *Progress Report of ANDS/PRSP Prepared for IMF/World Bank Board of Directors 2006/2007*, pp. 2 <http://www.and.s.gov.af/> (accessed 27 march 2008).

¹³ *Ibid*, pp. 4.

¹⁴ <http://www.cstc-a.com/Mission.html>.

¹⁵ *Progress Report of ANDS/PRSP Prepared for IMF/World Bank Board of Directors 2006/2007*, pp. 4, <http://www.and.s.gov.af/> (accessed 27 march 2008).

to tribal rules that have guided behavior for centuries. The international community has contributed significantly to progress according to commitments that have been made in the Afghan Compact. For instance, Canada maintains a presence of advisors laying the groundwork for personnel and process reforms in dozens of ministries ranging from the Ministry of Defense (MOD) to the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD). Iceland has agreed to lead reform in the Civil Aviation sector. Hundreds of other commitments have been made by countries from across the globe to contribute to establishing a functioning government. Regardless of the commitment or country, capacity building remains at the forefront of efforts. Giving Afghans the capability to govern themselves is the single most important piece of the reconstruction and development effort underway and clearly the desired end-state of both the U.S. and NATO.

The last pillar is Economic and Social Development. Over the last five years, Afghanistan has realized a 53% increase in the per capita GDP. While this is a good indicator that reconstruction and development progress is being made, this is an indicator of positive macroeconomic growth.¹⁶ From a rule of law perspective, eight civil and seventeen commercial laws were passed between March 2006 and March 2007.¹⁷ While this number seems horrid from a western perspective, noting the rapid rate of change in the socio-economic conditions we know are happening since the Afghans have been lifted from the oppressive Taliban government, it is notable progress given the capacity issues, religious and cultural context of Afghanistan society.

There is still much work to be done. The international donor aid is limited and is only enough to assist the poorest part of the population, which in itself is often a challenge to

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 9.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 7.

identify in a country so completely immersed in abject poverty. The reconstruction and development efforts that are provided by the numerous organizations present in Afghanistan need to be focused on the ANDS and in accordance with the Afghan Compact. The Armed Forces Journal had a great analogy to the situation that Afghanistan is facing:

“If (it) were an orchestra performing in a concert, the audience would howl in pain and trample one another on the way to the nearest exit. With a tone-deaf conductor presiding over an overly powerful percussion section, and the woodwind, brass and string sections all reading from different sheets of music, the resulting cacophony would be torturous.”¹⁸

While the comparison was intended to be for the U.S. ‘Interagency,’ it is even more applicable to identifying with the challenges presented to the international community in Afghanistan. The ANDS and Afghan Compact could be viewed as the musical score and the military forces, IGOs and NGOs as the different sections, there remains a question as to who the conductor is. While the Afghan government is in the process of building capacity, it may not have the capability to orchestrate the actions necessary to conduct reconstruction and development activities. There is something to be said for having the GOA lead the activities, but in light of the lack of capacity, a capable organization from the international community may need to serve as the ‘producer.’ “Beyond purely humanitarian considerations, the nexus of state failure...poses potentially catastrophic consequences to the international community.”¹⁹ Currently, this is not happening and the plan is not being executed with any degree of efficiency attributable to the lack of unity of effort.

The desire of NGOs and IGOs to present the appearance of being neutral and impartial to the population inhibits the process of directing reconstruction and development

¹⁸ Michele A. Flournoy and Shawn Brimley, “In Search of Harmony: Orchestrating the ‘Interagency’ for the Long War,” *Armed Forces Journal*, July 2006, pp. 1.

¹⁹ Department of Defense, *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept (Ver. 2)*, December 2006, pp. 14.

effort where it is most needed is only part of the challenge. Currently, the process of identifying when certain reconstruction and development efforts are most needed is not addressed in the overall plan. That leaves an opportunity for flexibility, but also leaves a question of whether or not the right decision is made when the time comes and who is influencing that decision and for what purposes. For instance, an individual country may be advocating for the growth and expansion of airports across the country based on the potential to attract development funding to one of its own companies. The plan may be accordance with the ANDS and the Compact, but not aligned with overall priorities, especially if development is being promoted for an airport in a region that would only use the improved infrastructure to smuggle contraband more efficiently...poppies for instance. An organization that has overall visibility on ebbs and flows in requirements in conjunction with related capabilities to execute developmental improvements should serve as a broker to ensure the rubber meets the road when and where it should with respect to the overall objective which is to provide for the sustainable development of the country.

U.S. AND ISAF OPERATIONS

With the understanding of the operational environment and the general plan for reconstruction and development it is possible to analyze both U.S. and NATO operations in Afghanistan and how they relate. The fact that the U.S. military was able to lead the effort to topple the Taliban government in just a few short months following 9/11 is important only to show that despite limited time for planning and limited resources, it was able to accomplish the initial objective of setting the conditions necessary to establish a capable and friendly government that was not willing to serve as a safe haven for organizations that were adversaries of the U.S. In December 2001, the International Security Assistance Force

(ISAF) deployed under the authority of the UN Security Council to secure Kabul after the Taliban were removed by the Northern Alliance forces.²⁰ In August of 2003, NATO assumed control of ISAF and by the autumn of 2006, ISAF had expanded as the operational command covering all of Afghanistan, subdivided into five Regional Commands (RCs). Each RC is operationally controlled by ISAF and forces are provided by individual NATO countries. RC-North, which includes Mazar-e-Sharif, is lead by a German contingent and RC-West which includes Herat is led by Spain and Italy. RC-South is centered around Kandahar and is led by Canada and Great Britain while RC-East, which includes Bagram, Jalabad and the contentious region bordering northwest Pakistan, is led by the U.S. RC-Capitol, which is the region surrounding and including Kabul, is led by the French. There is a considerable amount of mixing of nationalities across the country, but the lead nation of each RC has considerable influence above all others with regards to reconstruction and development efforts associated with the ANDS as well as military operations related to security in their region.

ISAF has some responsibility for the operations of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) across the country as well. The idea is to spread the “ISAF effect” without expanding ISAF itself into each province.²¹ However, the command relationship is not a direct one like the RCs. Individual nations who man and provide resources to the PRTs have the discretion to operate as they see fit and provide support to ISAF operations when they feel it necessary. The degree of cooperation varies by each PRT. Some operate as efficient means to execute reconstruction and development at the provincial level. Others serve as

²⁰ Dan K. McNeill, “International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan,” *Army Magazine*, October 2007, pp. 125.

²¹ Michael J. McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?” *Parameters*, Vol. 35, No. 4, Winter 2005/2006, pp. 32.

Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) and are used indiscriminately by military forces; the U.S. is the most guilty of this. The argument is that in areas where security is challenged, the military is right in using these as a resource in establishing a secure environment, but in the long run, this type of activity undermines the purpose of the PRT as being a place that the population sees as bringing progress and improving their lives as opposed to a source of violence. The U.S. initially developed the PRT concept to bring a presence to ungoverned areas,²² but ISAF took the concept to new levels by establishing one in almost every province and bringing the perspective of the international community to Afghanistan as well as opening up opportunities for the international communities to contribute to reconstruction and development at the grass roots level. Figure 1 is a map showing the location and nationality of PRTs in Afghanistan as of 2007.



²² Ibid, pp. 34.

While the range of operations being executed at any one particular PRT varies based on the lead nation, the focus is not just on physical reconstruction, but with “Government Institution Building and Security Sector Reform.”²³ Many lead nations have the military chain of command reporting through established channels while the civilian component reports back directly to the lead nation itself.²⁴ In simple terms, only the lead nation can direct the main effort of reconstruction and development leaving unity of effort and/or coordination to chance. Despite the fact that U.S. PRTs have military commanders, U.S. has clearly set this precedent in its PRTs by following the direction of the *Military Support to SSTR Operations JOC* which states that in accordance with NSPD 44, “the Secretary of State is designated as the lead of USG efforts to prepare, plan for, and conduct SSTR activities,” of which reconstruction and development is a part of.²⁵ One problem is that the U.S. State Department is not doing it. ISAF has taken on the responsibility to provide a secure environment and support the GOA, but simply acting as a security force is a poor approach, when reconstruction and development should be the focus given the lack of capacity within the GOA.

ISAF established the Presidential Advisory Group (PAG) which meets with President Karzai and his cabinet to coordinate ISAF activity with GOA and advise the senior government officials on activities. ISAF representatives include the ISAF Commander, the NATO Ambassador and other senior staff members as required. However, the ISAF representatives on the PAG have no authority to make decisions or draw a “Red Card”

²³ NATO, “Provincial Reconstruction Team North (West),” <http://www.hrf.tu.nato.int/isaf/public/prt1> .

²⁴ Michael J. McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?” *Parameters*, Vol. 35, No. 4, Winter 2005/2006, pp. 39.

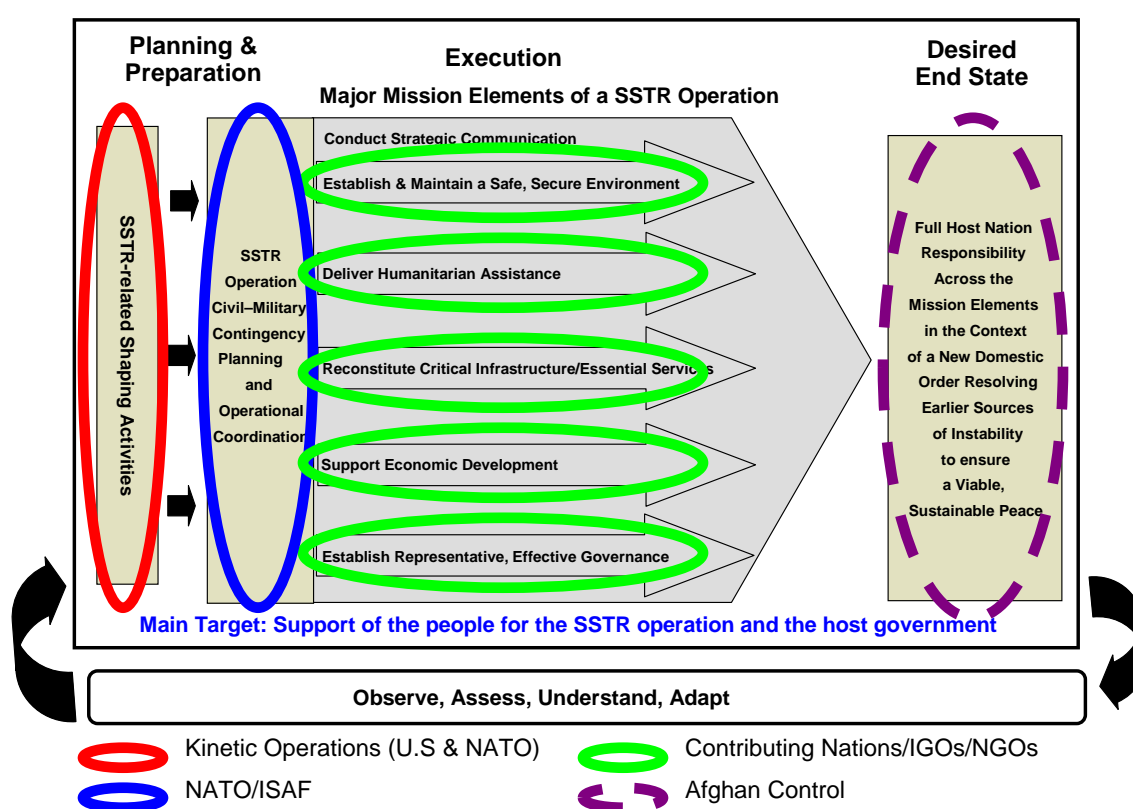
²⁵ Department of Defense, *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept (Ver. 2)*, December 2006, pp. i.

allowing ISAF the option to not support a decision of the GOA, let alone direct activity at the PRT level to put decisions into action. While the PAG has been an improvement over previous interaction between ISAF and the GOA, success has been based on personalities and collaboration rather than a rational decision making process tied to objectives and efficient execution after a decision has been made. While the U.S. has approached a reasonable conceptual solution to the problem of coordinating reconstruction and development efforts by designating a lead agency in doctrine, it falls short on execution by not making recommendations that would drive action within the international community to establish an effective process for international actions, which seem to be the norm in today's world. The international community is in a unique position to pick up where the U.S. JOC has left off via implementing the concept by replacing the "U.S. State Department" with "NATO." The central ideas for conducting SSTR operations falls directly in line with the Pillars of the ANDS and the NATO organization is in the unique position of being composed of a significant portion of the nations that have made commitments that are part of the Afghan Compact.

In addition to ISAF becoming more involved in the decision-making process guiding international reconstruction and development efforts and compensating for the lack of capacity within the Afghan government, some changes internal to NATO are in order. The current concept of operations and command relationship between ISAF and the PRTs needs to be reviewed. NATO addresses Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) differently than the U.S. does its equivalent Civil Affairs doctrine.

“The immediate purpose of CIMIC is to establish and maintain the full co-operation of the NATO commander and the civilian authorities, organisations, agencies and population within a commander's area of operations in order to allow him to fulfill his mission. This may include direct support to the implementation of a civil plan. The long-term purpose of CIMIC is to help create and sustain conditions that will support the achievement of Alliance objectives in operations.”²⁶

Figure 2 demonstrates the JOC could be used as general guidance for coordinating efforts of the ANDS.²⁷



While the NATO approach to CIMIC sounds good in general, there are some other models that need to be examined that may present other more viable options when it comes to achieving unity of effort to align the mission and resources as the figure demonstrates

²⁶ NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION, STANAG 2509, Op. cit., p.1-3.

²⁷ U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense, Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept (JOC), Washington DC: Department of Defense, December 2006, (Circles delineating actions and agencies added by the author).

while working under the NATO model for a government that lacks the capacity to adequately lead the complex process that needs to be put in place.

There are four basic CIMIC or Civil Affairs models.²⁸ The first is called “independent,” where the military and NGOs work in separate stovepipes toward a common goal. There is a mutual respect, but limited collaboration. This model is suitable for short-term stabilization operations or disaster relief and is most closely aligned with CIMIC doctrine in most NATO countries. The second model known as “collective” involves the military leading an operations cell until the security situation allows civilian leadership of operations. Plans are developed in concert and there is a high level of cooperation between the military and NGOs. This model is not dependent on military success and is suitable for operations ranging from disaster relief to long term stabilization. The third model is called the “bottom-up” approach where NGOs rely on the military for security and other support to execute their own agenda. This liberal approach relies on the initiative and vision of the humanitarian community which is sometimes disjointed. This third model is misaligned with the CIMIC doctrine associated with most NATO countries. The last model is known as the “top-down” approach is in line with U.S. Civil Affairs doctrine in accordance with the Military Support to SSTR JOC. It relies on guidance from the highest level of political authority. Despite the unity of effort achieved, this model presents challenges to taking advantage of opportunities on the ground in real time due to the vertical organizational structure and creates a confrontational environment with NGOs who prefer building consensus rather than having it imposed on them.

²⁸ Richard Garon, *Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and the Consolidation of Peace in the Middle-East*, Center for Defence and Security Studies, University of Manitoba, pp. 5-6.

Although NATO is doctrinally aligned with the independent model in practice by employing contributing nations in development activities, the current model being followed is the “bottom-up” approach. The U.S. often attempts to strong-arm the international community and its NGOs and employ the “top-down” model in RC-East creating a confrontational atmosphere leaving NGOs and other nations in a bitter state and resistant to cooperate with any organization to include ISAF, which is serving as the theater operational command.

Ironically, an objective analysis presents the conclusion that the “collective” model would be the most effective approach to CIMIC based on the nature of the environment that includes an insurgency and reconstruction and development efforts that are expected to last many years. Additionally, more and more NATO countries are becoming familiar with this concept of operations to include Great Britain and Canada. However, some strategic guidance from the international community would be in order, whether it is the UN or NATO. NATO, through the ISAF CJ-9 (CIMIC) would be the ideal place to collaborate and coordinate with contributing organizations based on strategic guidance, rather than just collect data under the bottom-up model as they currently do.

CONCLUSION

Considering the threat presented by an ungoverned Afghanistan and the challenges presented to the international community to execute reconstruction and development activities, getting all parties to work effectively toward a common goal is imperative. Compensating for the lack of capacity within the Afghan government is a crucial part of effective reconstruction efforts. NATO is in a unique position to serve in a greater capacity by providing overarching guidance to harmonize the activities of both military and civilian

agencies involved in both security and reconstruction and development efforts. By compensating for the lack of capacity within the GOA and becoming a larger part of the decision making process regarding the execution of the Afghan Compact, the international community, more specifically NATO countries, will be exercising their right and ability to protect vital interests from the international security perspective related to the threats posed by ungoverned areas. Additionally, by changing the model of CIMIC activity, in both doctrine and practice, to one that is a combination of strategic guidance of the international community, through NATO following guidance in the U.S. SSTRO JOC, and the “collective” process which will involve the contributing agencies in the decision making process, more efficient and effective gains could be seen.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In simple terms ISAF should stop allowing individual nations from taking actions in Afghanistan that may be counter-productive to the overall objective of timely and sustainable development. In order to do this, NATO needs to take the leading role in deciding how the Afghan Compact will be executed. While this may take some immediate authority from the GOA, their lack of capacity clearly calls for this kind of measure. The GOA could then focus on capacity development while NATO serves in a more active mentoring role. Additionally, ISAF would require some reorganization within the CJ-9 (CIMIC) division that would allow for a more active approach to collaborating and coordinating development activity of nations, IGOs, and NGOs, rather than just call agencies in the field and ask for an update on progress. With these changes and doctrinal adaptation at the theater strategic and operational level, unity of effort would be exponentially improved and greater progress toward the overall objective achieved.

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